

Building Bridges in Literacy Newsletter

February 2004



Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2

A National Pilot Project

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter for the Building Bridges in Literacy project.

By reading this newsletter you can find out:

- what the project is about
- who is involved
- what key issues for local literacy project teams have been identified across the country
- the support that has been available to project teams
- how to access and use the Building Bridges website.

A National Pilot Project

'Primary and secondary schools have faced a particular challenge in addressing the need to develop effective curriculum liaison. Such liaison is necessary to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move from primary to secondary education.'

Managing Pupils' Learning: Continuity and Progression from P7 to S1:
A Report by HM Inspectors of Schools, 1999.

Improving attainment and achievement in the 10–14 age groups has long been on the educational agenda in Scotland, and the phenomenon of the 'lower secondary dip' is well-documented. Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 is an exciting new national pilot project being managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland and funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department. All local authorities have nominated a secondary school and one or more associated primaries to take part. Schools are undertaking action research based on locally identified priorities to review and improve programmes for reading, writing, talking and listening across the curriculum. The project is exploring ways that have been tried and tested by teachers, to develop effective curricular liaison, and to ensure that courses build evenly within and across stages.

The aims and objectives are to:

- raise attainment in reading and writing, in the P6–S2 years, through the development and sharing of effective practice
- sustain raised levels of attainment beyond the time of the project
- promote a coherent approach to strategies for teaching and learning in English language in the P6–S2 years in conjunction with the school librarian
- establish the teaching of 'literacy across the curriculum' by focussing on one other subject area in the project secondary schools, and by sharing this effective practice with other departments
- ensure smooth and effective curricular transition
- build on the outcomes of Assessment is for Learning, Project 1: Formative Assessment
- promote the concept of the critical friend as a model for continuing professional development
- share good practice identified by project teams within and beyond their authority.



Projects in Progress

Members of project teams are undertaking an action research approach to their projects. They have already identified a key focus, relevant to them. They will research current thinking, trial new methodologies and collect evidence of effectiveness. They will form partnerships with critical friends to identify successful strategies. As a result of all that they have learned, they will revise their English language programmes and promote strategies to enhance literacy across the curriculum. Eventually, teams will each write up a case study to share with colleagues within and beyond their own authority. The aim of all this is to embed the very best practice that emerges from the project in schools and to make change real and sustainable.

Each local authority project is unique. Each is underpinned by different needs and has a different starting point. Each hopes to achieve different outcomes but with the common aim of raising achievement and attainment in literacy.

There are areas of similarity of key focus that reflect the concerns of all literacy specialists.

Key issues

Reading for information and for enjoyment. Projects will identify ways of making children engage meaningfully with texts of different genres.

Writing, particularly functional writing. There is a strong belief that the learning process could become easier and more effective if there were a consistency of methodologies, for example in approaches to scaffolding, and project teams are trialling these.

Thinking skills and the promotion of talking and listening for their own sakes and for the impact they have on the other modes of reading and writing. Strategies identified as good practice can be used to inform other areas of literacy teaching.

For a complete list of individual local authority key issues, visit the local authority projects section of the website

www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges



Networking

Area seminar report

Two rounds of professional development seminars have taken place across Scotland with the aim of supporting the Building Bridges project through sharing good practice and effective classroom strategies, networking and reflecting on projects. Run by Learning and Teaching Scotland, and supported by colleagues from HMIE, SEED, university faculties of education as well as by fellow practitioners, these seminars have been overwhelmingly well received.

'I enjoyed the presentations by the classroom practitioners ... it was very interesting to hear from principal teachers and how their methodology impacted across curricular areas ... excellent opportunities to discuss with project teams ... I was worried when I arrived that our work was too vague, but now I know the strategies I will use in the classroom to improve my literacy teaching ...'

Seminar participants

'I was at one of the Glasgow seminars in October. It was very good to see mixed teams of teachers grappling with that ever-present challenge of how best to address issues of continuity between primary and secondary. In particular it was interesting to sit in on discussions where groups were working out which aspect of literacy they would focus on as part of the Building Bridges project. Plans with a blend of creativity and pragmatism were beginning to take shape. Looking ahead, there will be many issues for groups to resolve in order to make their projects work and come to desired outcomes. I look forward to then and, in the meantime, hope to be of some help in the process of getting there.'

Joan MacKay, HMIE

Teamwork

Secondary subject specialists, for example history, craft and design and physics teachers, and school librarians are part of the team, as well as primary class teachers and secondary teachers of English. They are supported locally by senior managers in schools and education officers. Cathrin Howells, Development Officer for Literacy, and Clair Sharp, Development Officer for the Building Bridges project, are also supporting the project from Learning and Teaching Scotland. Colleagues from HMIE and university faculties of education are providing practical advice and support to local authority cluster groups.



If you want to know more about the content of the days, why not visit our website, www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges, where all the presentations are available to download? You could even take part in some of the activities in your own school, shadowing the project teams. Let us know what you think and how you get on.

The Web Resource

The Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 project has a dedicated website to support project teams and to disseminate information more widely.

Mark Oxbrow, Content Editor, writes,

‘It is important to be able to find all the information you need in one place so the Building Bridges in Literacy web resource aims to provide access to all project support materials, unique resources and seminar materials. Useful information can be downloaded, printed off or read online. You can also browse through the latest research and reading materials or actively participate in our discussion area.

We hope that the web resource will be much more than just an online store of documents. It is a virtual space for practitioners to meet, exchange ideas and thoughts, and share their experience and effective practice with colleagues throughout Scotland.’

Your views – contact us

We’ve outlined some aspects of the Building

Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 project managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland.

We would welcome your feedback.

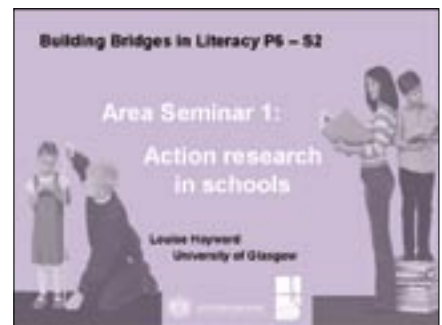
Please e-mail us at buildingbridges@LTScotland.org.uk

or write to:

Clair Sharp, Development Officer, Learning and Teaching Scotland, 74 Victoria Crescent Road, Glasgow G12 9JN

or

Cathrin Howells, Development Officer, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Gardyne Road, Dundee DD5 1NY



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Learning and Teaching Scotland, 74 Victoria Crescent Road, Glasgow G12 9JN
Tel: 0141 337 5000 Fax: 0141 337 5050

Learning and Teaching Scotland, Gardyne Road, Dundee DD5 1NY
Tel: 01382 443600 Fax: 01382 443645/6

www.LTScotland.org.uk e: enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk